

Supreme Court of Texas

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Coordinates: 30.275853°N 97.741054°W﻿ / ﻿30.275853°N 97.741054°W﻿ / 30.275853; -97.741054

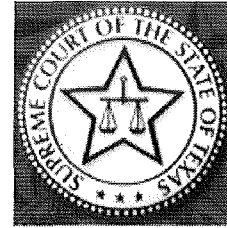
The **Supreme Court of Texas** is the court of last resort for civil matters (including juvenile delinquency which the law considers to be a civil matter and not criminal) in the state of Texas. A different court, the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, is the court of last resort for criminal matters in the State of Texas.

The Court is composed of a Chief Justice and eight Associate Justices. The Court meets in Downtown Austin, Texas in a building located on the state Capitol grounds, behind the Texas State Capitol.

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Supreme Court of Texas



Seal of the Texas Supreme Court

Established	1840 ^[1]
Country	Texas , United States
Location	Austin, Texas
Authorized by	Texas Constitution
Decisions are appealed to	Supreme Court of the United States
Website	http://www.supreme.courts.state.tx.us/
Chief Justice	
Currently	Nathan Hecht
Since	October 1, 2013

Regulation of the legal profession in Texas

By statute, the Texas Supreme Court has administrative control over the State Bar of Texas, an agency of the judiciary.^[2] The Texas Supreme Court has the sole authority to license attorneys in Texas,^[3] and also appoints the members of the Board of Law Examiners^[4] which, under instructions of the Supreme Court, administers the Texas bar examination.^[5]

Justices of the Court

The Court has a Chief Justice and eight associate justices. Each member of the Court must be at least 35 years of age, a citizen of Texas, licensed to practice law in Texas, and must have practiced law (or have been a lawyer and a judge of a court of record together) for at least ten years.^[6] The Clerk of the Court is appointed by the Justices and serves a four-year term.

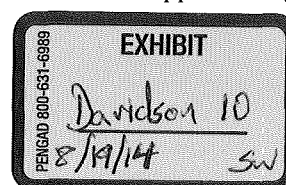


Texas Supreme Court Building

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Election of members of the Court

The Chief Justice and the associate justices are elected to staggered six-year terms in state-wide partisan elections. When a vacancy arises the Governor of Texas may appoint Justices, subject to Senate confirmation, to serve out the remainder of an unexpired term until the next general election. As of 2010, six of the current Justices, a majority, were originally appointed by Governor Rick Perry. The current Justices, like all the Judges of the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, are all Republican.

The place numbers have no special meaning as all justices are elected state-wide, except that the Chief Justice position is considered "Place 1".

Women on the Court

Hortense Sparks Ward, who became the first woman to pass the Texas Bar Exam in 1910, was appointed Special Chief Justice of an all-female Texas Supreme Court 15 years later. All of the court's male justices recused themselves from *Johnson v. Darr*, a 1924 case involving the Woodmen of the World, and, since nearly every member of the Texas Bar was a member of that fraternal organization, paying personal insurance premiums that varied with the claims decided against it, no male judges or attorneys could be found to hear the case.^[7] After ten months of searching for suitable male replacements to decide the case, Governor Pat Neff decided on January 1, 1925, to appoint a special court composed of three women. This court, consisting of Ward, Hattie Leah Henenberg, and Ruth Virginia Brazzil, met for five months and ultimately ruled in favor of Woodmen of the World.^[8]

On July 25, 1982, Ruby Kless Sondock became the court's first regular female justice, when she was appointed to replace the Associate Justice James G. Denton who had died of a heart attack. Sondock served the remainder of Denton's term, which ended on December 31, 1982, but did not seek election to the Supreme Court in her own right.

^[9] Rose Spector became the first woman elected to the court in 1992 and served until 1998 when she was defeated by Harriet O'Neill.^[10]

Current Justices

Justice	Party Affiliation	Place	Date Service Began	Term Ends
Nathan L. Hecht	Republican	Chief Justice	January 1, 1989	2014
Don R. Willett	Republican	2	August 24, 2005	2018
Debra Lehrmann	Republican	3	June 21, 2010	2016
John P. Devine	Republican	4	January 1, 2013	2018
Paul W. Green	Republican	5	January 1, 2005	2016
Jeff Brown	Republican	6	October 3, 2013	2014 ^[a]
Jeffrey S. Boyd	Republican	7	December 3, 2012	2014
Phil Johnson	Republican	8	April 11, 2005	2014
Eva Guzman	Republican	9	October 8, 2009	2016

History of membership of the Court

Succession of seats

Chief Justice (Place 1)			Place 2			Place 3		
Established by the Texas Constitution of 1876			Established by the Texas Constitution of 1876			Established by the Texas Constitution of 1876		
G. Moore	Democratic	1878-1881	Gould	Democratic	1876-1881	G. Moore	Democratic	1876-1878
Gould	Democratic	1881-1882	Stayton	Democratic	1881-1888	Bonner	Democratic	1878-1882
Willie	Democratic	1882-1888	Walker	Democratic	1888-1889	West	Democratic	1882-1885
Stayton	Democratic	1888-1894	Henry	Democratic	1889-1893	S. Robertson	Democratic	1885-1886
Gaines	Democratic	1894-1911	Brown	Democratic	1893-1911	Gaines	Democratic	1886-1894
Brown	Democratic	1911-1915	Ramsey	Democratic	1911-1912	Denman	Democratic	1894-1899
N. Phillips	Democratic	1915-1921	N. Phillips	Democratic	1912-1915	Williams	Democratic	1899-1911
Cureton	Democratic	1921-1940	Yantis	Democratic	1915-1918	Bibrell	Democratic	1911-1913
W.F. Moore	Democratic	1940-1941	Greenwood	Democratic	1918-1934	Hawkins	Democratic	1913-1921
Alexander	Democratic	1941-1948	Sharp	Democratic	1934-1952	Pierson	Democratic	1921-1935
Hickman	Democratic	1948-1961	Culver	Democratic	1953-1965	Critz	Democratic	1935-1945
Calvert	Democratic	1961-1972	Pope	Democratic	1964-1982	Simpson	Democratic	1945-1949
Greenhill	Democratic	1972-1982	T. Robertson	Democratic	1982-1988	Harvey	Democratic	1949-1950
Pope	Democratic	1982-1985	Doggett	Democratic	1989-1994	Calvert	Democratic	1950-1961
Hill	Democratic	1985-1988	Owen	Republican	1995-2005	Steakley	Democratic	1961-1980
Phillips	Republican	1988-2004	Willett	Republican	2005-present	Wallace	Democratic	1981-1988
Jefferson	Republican	2004-2013				Cook	Republican	1988-1992
Hecht	Republican	2004-present				Spector	Democratic	1993-1998
						O'Neill	Republican	1999-2010
						Lehrmann	Republican	2010-present

Place 4			Place 5			Place 6		
Established in 1918 as Commissioner, Section B			Established in 1918 as Commissioner, Section B			Established in 1918 as Commissioner, Section A		
Made a Supreme Court judgeship in 1945			Made a Supreme Court judgeship in 1945			Made a Supreme Court judgeship in 1945		
Sadler	Democratic	1918- 1920	Montgomery	Democratic	1918- 1919	Taylor	Democratic	1919-1921
Powell	Democratic	1920- 1927	Kittrell	Democratic	1919- 1921	Randolph	Democratic	1921-1923
Leddy	Democratic	1927- 1933	Hamilton	Democratic	1921	Bishop	Democratic	1923-1927
Smedley	Democratic	1933- 1954	Short	Democratic	1925- 1934	Critz	Democratic	1927-1935
Walker	Democratic	1954- 1975	Taylor	Democratic	1935- 1950	Hickman	Democratic	1935-1948
Doughty	Democratic	1975- 1976	Wilson	Democratic	1950- 1956	Garwood	Democratic	1948-1958
Yarbrough	Democratic	1976- 1977	McCall	Democratic	1956	Hamilton	Democratic	1959-1970
Barrow	Democratic	1977- 1984	Norvell	Democratic	1957- 1968	Denton	Democratic	1971-1982
R. Gonzales	Democratic	1984- 1998	Reavley	Democratic	1968- 1977	Sondock	Democratic	1982
A. Gonzales	Republican	1999- 2000	Chadick	Democratic	1977- 1978	Kilgarlin	Democratic	1983-1988
Jefferson	Republican	2001- 2004	Campbell	Democratic	1978- 1988	Hecht	Republican	1989-2013
Medina	Republican	2004- 2012	Culver	Republican	1988	Brown	Republican	2013 -present
John P. Devine	Republican	2013- present	Hightower	Democratic	1988- 1996			
			Abbott	Republican	1996- 2001			
			Rodriguez	Republican	2001- 2002			
			Smith	Republican	2002- 2004			
			Green	Republican	2005- present			

Place 7			Place 8			Place 9		
Established in 1918 as Commissioner, Section B			Established in 1918 as Commissioner, Section A			Established in 1918 as Commissioner, Section A		
Made a Supreme Court judgeship in 1945			Made a Supreme Court judgeship in 1945			Made a Supreme Court judgeship in 1945		
McClendon	Democratic	1918-1923	Sonfield	Democratic	1918-1921	Strong	Democratic	1918-1920
Stayton	Democratic	1923-1925	Gallagher	Democratic	1921-1923	Spencer	Democratic	1920-1923
Speer	Democratic	1925-1929	Blanks	Democratic	1923-1924	German	Democratic	1923-1925
Ryan	Democratic	1929-1937	Chapman	Democratic	1924-1925	Harvey	Democratic	1925-1943
Martin	Democratic	1937-1939	Nickels	Democratic	1925-1929	Folley	Democratic	1943-1949
Slatton	Democratic	1939-1947	Sharp	Democratic	1929-1934	Griffin	Democratic	1949-1968
Hart	Democratic	1947-1950	German	Democratic	1935-1941	McGee	Democratic	1969-1986
Smith	Democratic	1950-1970	Brewster	Democratic	1941-1957	Mauzy	Democratic	1987-1992
Daniel	Democratic	1971-1978	Greenhill	Democratic	1957-1972	Enoch	Republican	1993-2003
Spears	Democratic	1979-1990	H. Phillips	Democratic	1972	Brister	Republican	2003-2009
Cornyn	Republican	1991-1997	S. Johnson	Democratic	1973-1979	Guzman	Republican	2009-present
Hankinson	Republican	1997-2002	Garwood	Republican	1978-1980			
Wainwright	Republican	2002-2012	Ray	Democratic	1980-1990			
Boyd	Republican	2012-present	Gammage	Democratic	1990-1995			
			Baker	Republican	1995-2002			
			Schneider	Republican	2002-2004			
			P. Johnson	Republican	2004-present			

Supreme Court Committees

Judicial Committee on Information Technology (<http://www.courts.state.tx.us/jcit/>) (JCIT)

Created in 1997 JCIT was established to set standards and guidelines for the systematic implementation and integration of information technology into the trial and appellate courts in Texas.

JCIT approaches this mission by providing a forum for state-local, inter-branch, and public-private collaboration, and development of policy recommendations for the Supreme Court of Texas. Court technology, and the information it carries, are sprawling topics, and Texas is a diverse state with decentralized funding and decision-making for trial court technology. JCIT provides a forum for discussion of court technology and information projects. With this forum, JCIT reaches out to external partners such as the Conference of Urban Counties, the County Information Resource Agency, Texas.gov, and TIJIS (Texas Integrated Justice Information Systems), and advises or is consulted by the Office of Court Administration on a variety of projects.

Three themes consistently recur in the JCIT conversation: expansion and governance of electronic filing; the evolution and proliferation of court case management systems; and the evolution and governance of technology standards for reporting and sharing information across systems in civil, family, juvenile, and criminal justice.

The Founding Chair of JCIT from 1997-2009 was Peter S. Vogel, a partner at Gardere Wynne Sewell LLP in Dallas, and since 2009 the JCIT Chair has been Justice Rebecca Simmons.

Notes

1. ^
<http://www.supreme.courts.state.tx.us/advisories/anniversa>
2. ^ Tex. Gov't Code section 81.011.
3. ^ Tex. Gov't Code sections 81.061 and 82.021
4. ^ Tex. Gov't Code section 82.001
5. ^ Tex. Gov't Code section 82.004.
6. ^ Tex. Const., Art. 5, Sec. 2.
7. ^
<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/jpa01>
8. ^ "Hortense Sparks Ward (1875-1944)" (http://tarlton.law.utexas.edu/justices/profile/view/Justices_of_Texas_1836-1986. Tarlton Law Library, The University of Texas at Austin. October 16, 2009. Retrieved July 16, 2013.
9. ^ "Ruby Kless Sondock (born 1926)" (http://tarlton.law.utexas.edu/justices/profile/view/Justices_of_Texas_1836-1986. Tarlton Law Library, The University of Texas at Austin. October 16, 2009. Retrieved July 16, 2013.
10. ^ Cruse, Don (January 8, 2008). "An Unusual History of Women Serving on the Texas Supreme Court" (http://www.scotxblog.com/elections/women-on-the-texas-supreme-court/#footnote_0_62). *The Supreme Court of Texas Blog*. Retrieved July 16, 2013.

Further reading

- Haley, James L. *The Texas Supreme Court: A Narrative History, 1836–1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013. xxviii, 322 pp.

External links

- Official Website for the Texas Supreme Court (<http://www.supreme.courts.state.tx.us/>)
- The Texas Reports, the decisions of the Texas Supreme Court from 1846 to 1885 (<http://texashistory.unt.edu/browse/collection/TXRPT/>), hosted by the Portal to Texas History (<http://texashistory.unt.edu/>)
- "Judiciary" (by Paul Womack) from *The Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/jzj01>) (Texas State Historical Association)

- Texas Supreme Court Historical Society (<http://www.texascourthistory.org/>)

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Categories: State supreme courts of the United States | Texas state courts

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